American Cancer Society – MCW Cancer Center Institutional Research Grant Request for Applications

Purpose and Overview

The purpose of the individual ACS-IRG Pilot Awards is to support the development of exceptional cancer-related research projects for junior faculty members who are in the process of establishing independent cancer research programs.

The goal of the individual ACS-IRG pilot awards is to assist junior faculty in generating preliminary data to increase their likelihood of success in obtaining extramural peer-reviewed funding. A clear plan for how the pilot data will support development of the external funding proposal(s) is required (see Future Funding Plan instruction).

Priority Areas of Funding for the Current Funding Cycle

Studies targeting breast and prostate cancer and sarcoma will be prioritized, though proposals involving all cancer types are eligible. All areas of cancer research – basic, preclinical, prevention and control, population, epidemiological and psychosocial cancer research (including quality of life research) – will be considered for funding. Applications for novel clinical projects (such as improvements of diagnostics and screening as well as genetic studies to improve prediction by identifying and understanding how genes and illnesses may be related) and for community-based projects are encouraged in addition to basic science projects. Note: This mechanism does not provide support for interventional treatment clinical trials.

Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria

Eligibility

- Proposed research must be cancer-relevant.

- MCW junior faculty members (instructors and assistant professors; includes Versiti BRI investigators) are eligible to apply. Applicants must be in their first six years of independent research or faculty appointment. K-award holders (except K99/R00) within six years of the initial faculty appointment and without peer-reviewed extramural funding are eligible.

- Research can take place and expenditures incurred only at MCW, Children's Wisconsin, Children's Research Institute, Froedtert Hospital, Versiti BRI, or the Zablocki VAMC.

- Follow-on external funding proposals must be submitted through MCW.

- Applicants cannot have peer-reviewed, national funding at the start date of the proposed ACS funding. Peer-reviewed funding includes grants from the NIH (except K08/K22-awards) or these external funding sources.

- Applicants on a visa must provide documentation that the visa terms allow enough time to complete the ACS-IRG pilot project.

- Applicants are encouraged to seek project advice and support from the appropriate MCW Cancer Center (CC) Associate Director and Research Program Leader.

Evaluation

Each application will be assigned to internal and external reviewers who have substantial expertise in

cancer research and in reviewing grant proposals.

Review criteria include:

- Standard NIH criteria (significance, innovation, approach and investigative team);
- Likelihood that preliminary results will lead to external peer-reviewed funding;
- Participation in CC programs (*e.g.,* attend Research Program meetings, participate in grant review panels, participate in recurring seminars and symposia);
- A well-thought-out "Future Funding Plan" (see instructions) describing how funds will provide data that is critical for future extramural grant application(s).

Budget: $60,000 for a two-year award period. The ACS-IRG provides $40,000. $20,000 in supplemental funds from the CC will be awarded upon notification that the ACS-IRG funds have been spent.

Application Instructions
(Please see the CC website for additional information and forms.)

NOTE: *All required components of the application MUST be submitted to CC Research Program staff by the application deadline. If components are missing at the submission deadline or do not adhere to the page limits listed in the RFA, investigators will be given 24 hours to respond. Otherwise, the application will be disqualified and will not undergo the formal review process.*

Application Format: Use standard 11-point font, single space, and half-inch margins throughout the application. Consecutively number all pages.

- **Cover Page:** To initiate, please sign in to the Faculty Collaboration Database so that certain fields can be auto-populated. Include project title, investigators and affiliations. After completion, a PDF of the Cover Sheet will be emailed to you. Combine (concatenate) the cover page produced with the remainder of your application for submission (see below).
- **Scientific Abstract:** Provide a summary of the project. (250-word limit)
- **Lay Abstract:** Provide a brief summary of the proposed research project in layman's terms. If funded, this abstract may be distributed to the funding source and can be used in written correspondence with donors and interested parties. (200-word limit)
- **Response to Reviewers:** (If applicable) Describe changes that have been made in response to reviewer comments. (1-page limit)
- **Specific Aims:** State concisely the hypothesis to be tested and the specific aim(s) to be achieved during the one-year project period. (1-page limit)
- **Research Strategy** (4-page limit)**:**
    a. Background-Significance-Innovation (1-page limit)
    b. Approach (3-page limit)
- **Future Funding Plan (mandatory):** Applications must include plans and a timeline for an NCI R01 or equivalent cancer-relevant grant submission. State the agencies, mechanisms and timing of planned future grant applications that will utilize the preliminary data produced under this

ACS- IRG Pilot Award. **It is <u>required</u>** that the applicant state the tentative specific aims of the upcoming extramural grant application. (200-word limit)

- **Literature Cited:** List only references pertinent to the proposed research. References do not count against the page limit.

- **Budget:** Use [budget template](#) found on the CC website followed by a Budget Justification. Budget cap is $40,000 direct costs. No indirect costs are allowed. No faculty salaries, student tuition and fees, or equipment should be included. Faculty effort related to this award must be listed. Salary or stipend support for laboratory personnel, research associates, postdoctoral fellows, study coordinators, *etc.* may be included. Every budgeted item must be classified into a category (*e.g.*, personnel, supplies). You are <u>required</u> to obtain a quote for Biostatistical services via [iLab](#) and reference the iLab quote # in the budget justification. Use of other CC Shared Resources is encouraged; if CC Shared Resource usage is a component of your proposal, an iLab quote for services <u>must</u> be attached to the budget. Travel expenses will only be allowed when necessary to carry out the proposed research project. Any no-cost extensions will require review of the final report and prior approval by the ACS-IRG PI and CC Leadership.

- **NIH-format Biosketches** (5-page limit each)**:** Biosketches for all faculty investigators must be included. Personal statements must include the specific role of each team member. In addition to the standard NIH-format biosketch sections, include an additional Current and Pending Support section that lists all pending grant applications. Give the expected notification date for each pending application and describe any overlap or relationship between the pending application and this ACS- IRG Pilot Award proposal.

- **Form B: [Non-Supplanting Form](#)**
- **Form C: [ACS Research Pilot Grant Certification](#)**
- **Form D: [Return on Investment](#).** Previous CC Pilot Grant recipients must complete.
- **Letters of Support:** Letters of support from the appropriate individuals, which may include your CC Research Program Leader, collaborator(s), and mentor (see also below).

- **Regulatory Approvals:** PIs are expected to obtain regulatory approvals [*e.g.*, IACUC and IRB] within three months of award notification. Please note that the funding cannot be released until required approvals have been obtained and submitted to MCWCCResearchPrograms@mcw.edu.

- **Mentoring Plan:** Please include a mentoring plan with your application (1-page limit). All applicants who have not had a previously funded peer-reviewed grant from the NIH or extramural organizations listed on [Organizations with Peer Review Funding Systems](#) must have a mentorship committee to assist in reading and providing feedback on the proposal. A mentorship committee must include a minimum of two faculty members (preferably one CC member). A letter of support from at least one of the mentorship committee members is required.

Timeline

RFA release: **01/15/2026**. An LOI indicating your intent to submit and briefly describing your proposal and team members is due on or before **02/12/2026** (250-word limit). (The sole purpose of the LOI is for administrative planning, including study section composition and expertise.) **Applicants are highly encouraged to present their Specific Aims at the Cancer Research Forum on 02/26/2026.** Full applications are **due by 11:59 p.m. on 04/01/2026**. Please email one PDF file of the application to

MCWCCResearchPrograms@mcw.edu. Notifications of award will be made after peer review and Director's Council approval. The start date will be on or after **7/1/2026**, dependent on the status of any required human and animal studies protocol approvals, with the understanding that approvals will not take longer than three months after award notice. Please contact MCWCCResearchPrograms@mcw.edu with any questions.

Program Expectations

- Publications in peer-reviewed journals
- R01 or equivalent grant submission within one year after pilot award period of execution
- Award recipients MUST acknowledge the CC and the IRG funding (grant no. IRG- 19-138-34) support from the American Cancer Society in any publications, scientific abstracts (where permitted), posters at scientific meetings, press releases or other media communications, and internet-based communications. Award letters will indicate the appropriate funding source to acknowledge.
- A final report is required upon project completion, including project results and grant applications submitted or planned for submission.
- Submit annual updates regarding grants, other funding, and publications leveraging results for five years.
- PI and key personnel participation in CC programs or activities (*e.g.*, program meetings, grant review panels, recurring seminars, symposia, clinical trial advisory committees such as SRC, IIT Steering Committee).
- Contact PI, MPIs, and Co-Is must participate annually in the Audaxity bicycle fundraiser as a rider and/or fundraiser for any of the distances available.

No-cost Extensions

If you cannot complete your research activities prior to the award end date, you may request a 12-month no-cost extension (NCE). NCEs are limited to a maximum carryover of 25% of the original award amount and can only be approved once. Both the ACS-IRG initial award and ACS-IRG Supplemental award are eligible for an NCE.

To apply for a NCE, send an email to MCWCCResearchPrograms@mcw.edu expressing interest to apply no later than 60 days prior to the award end date (in this case 4/30/2027). Administration will respond by emailing a request for additional materials. The following items will be requested to process an NCE:

- Completed NCE request form
- A current Grant Activity Summary Report (GASR) from Oracle
- Timeline of activities to take place during the extension period
- A written plan consisting of the scope of work and proposed scientific accomplishments, *e.g.*
  - Description of the remaining experiments
  - Additional aims
  - Publications resulting from this award (published and in progress)
  - Extramural grant applications submitted and planned
  - A list of talks, posters, and journal publications in which the awardee has acknowledged the ACS-IRG at the time of the NCE request.

Instructions for Supplement Award Implementation

The CC supplemental funds of $20,000 will be issued after the initial ACS funds have been expended, awardee department administration should contact MCWCCResearchPrograms@mcw.edu for implementation of the supplement.